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DIET THERAPY: THE IMPORTANCE OF NUTRITION IN TREATING DIET-RELATED DISEASES

Relevance: In the modern world, improper nutrition and high-calorie diets have become a widespread issue, contributing to various diseases. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2022, 43% of the global adult population (2.5 billion people) were overweight, with approximately 16% (890 million people) classified as obese [1]. This number has significantly increased compared to 1990 when the global overweight prevalence was 25% [2]. Obesity is one of the leading causes of type 2 diabetes, with the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) estimating that in 2021, 10.5% (536 million people) of adults aged 20–79 worldwide had diabetes, a figure projected to rise to 783 million by 2045 [5].

Obesity and poor dietary habits also contribute to an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases, leading to heart attacks and strokes. Cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of death worldwide, responsible for 17.9 million fatalities in 2019, accounting for 32% of all deaths [10]. Preventative and therapeutic dietary interventions are crucial in mitigating these conditions. Diet therapy involves modifying food intake to treat and prevent diseases [32].

Diet therapy is not just about weight loss but includes structured dietary modifications tailored to specific diseases. Examples include calorie restriction for obesity, carbohydrate control for diabetes, sodium reduction for hypertension, gluten-free diets for celiac disease, and the low-FODMAP diet for irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Table 1. Global Statistics on Diet-Related Health Conditions

Indicator (Adults)	Global Prevalence	Source
Overweight (BMI ≥ 25)	43% (2.5 billion people) in 2022	WHO, 2022
Obesity (BMI ≥ 30)	16% (890 million people) in 2022	WHO, 2022
Diabetes (20–79 years)	10.5% (537 million people) in 2021	IDF, 2021
Cardiovascular mortality	17.9 million deaths in 2019 (32% of all deaths)	WHO, 2019

These statistics highlight the necessity of integrating diet therapy into healthcare strategies. Structured dietary interventions not only prevent diseases but also improve treatment outcomes in already diagnosed individuals.

Keywords: Diet therapy; Nutritional treatment; Dietary intervention; Type 2 diabetes; Obesity; Cardiovascular diseases; Gastrointestinal disorders; Medical nutrition therapy.

Introduction

Diet therapy refers to the structured modification of food intake to prevent, manage, or treat diseases [15]. It involves selecting specific foods, controlling nutrient intake, and adjusting dietary patterns according to a patient's medical needs. Poor nutrition not only contributes to metabolic disorders but

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can also lead to fatigue, immune suppression, and worsening of existing diseases [19]. Therefore, personalized dietary interventions play a crucial role in modern healthcare.

Diet therapy is applied to a range of conditions, including obesity, metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, gastrointestinal disorders, allergies, kidney diseases, and pancreatic disorders [32]. For instance, in ischemic heart disease and hypertension, sodium and fat intake reduction is recommended, whereas in dyslipidemia, limiting cholesterol-rich foods can significantly lower blood cholesterol levels. Similarly, fiber-rich diets help manage constipation and digestive disorders, while low-protein diets are crucial for kidney disease management [4].

This article explores the role of diet therapy in managing type 2 diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular diseases, and gastrointestinal disorders, analyzing clinical studies and statistical data to provide evidence-based insights.

Materials and Methods

This study adopts an analytical approach based on a review of scientific literature on diet therapy. Primary sources include reports from global health organizations (WHO, IDF), statistical data, and clinical trials published between 2000 and 2024. Epidemiological data on diet-related diseases were extracted from WHO and IDF reports, while the effectiveness of diet therapy in specific diseases was assessed using results from large-scale clinical trials, such as the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP), PREDIMED, and DiRECT studies [6].

All data were systematically categorized and analyzed based on disease-specific outcomes [24]. The study employed Microsoft Excel for data compilation and visualization, while figures and tables were created to present findings concisely. References were cited using in-text citations in square brackets [30] corresponding to the bibliography.

Results and Discussion

Diet Therapy in Type 2 Diabetes

Type 2 diabetes is primarily caused by dietary imbalances and obesity. Managing carbohydrate intake is crucial for glycemic control. Studies have shown that modifying dietary patterns can significantly reduce glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c) levels, thereby preventing diabetes-related complications [7]. The **Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP)** demonstrated that lifestyle modifications, including dietary changes and increased physical activity, reduced diabetes onset by 58% compared to a control group [18]. Similarly, the **DiRECT trial** showed that intensive calorie restriction (800 kcal/day) led to diabetes remission in 46% of patients within one year, without requiring medication [12].

Diet Therapy in Obesity

Obesity treatment primarily focuses on reducing calorie intake and modifying dietary composition [28]. Clinical trials indicate that structured dietary interventions result in a 5–10% reduction in body weight, improving metabolic markers such as blood pressure, cholesterol, and insulin sensitivity [16]. Popular diet approaches include low-carb, low-fat, and intermittent fasting; however, long-term adherence determines success more than the specific diet type [17]. Pharmacotherapy and bariatric surgery are adjuncts but require dietary compliance for sustained results [20].

Diet Therapy in Cardiovascular Diseases

Cardiovascular diseases are strongly influenced by diet. The **DASH diet** (low in sodium and high in potassium-rich vegetables) has been shown to reduce systolic blood pressure by 6–11 mmHg,

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comparable to some antihypertensive medications [19]. The **PREDIMED study** demonstrated that the Mediterranean diet reduced major cardiovascular events (heart attacks, strokes) by 30% [17]. These findings highlight the role of dietary interventions in preventing and managing heart disease.

Diet Therapy in Gastrointestinal Disorders

Gastrointestinal conditions like celiac disease, IBS, and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) significantly benefit from dietary interventions [8]. A gluten-free diet remains the only effective treatment for celiac disease, leading to symptom resolution and mucosal healing [22]. The **low-FODMAP diet**, which eliminates fermentable carbohydrates, has been shown to alleviate IBS symptoms in 50–80% of patients [14]. In pediatric Crohn's disease, **exclusive enteral nutrition (EEN)** has induced remission in 85% of cases, offering a non-pharmacological alternative [13].

Conclusion and Recommendations

Diet therapy is a fundamental tool in managing diet-related diseases. Evidence from large-scale studies confirms that dietary modifications improve metabolic health, reduce disease risks, and enhance treatment outcomes [30]. However, its implementation is often overlooked. To enhance the role of diet therapy, we recommend:

- **Training healthcare professionals** on medical nutrition therapy.
- **Educating patients** on the impact of diet on health.
- **Public health initiatives** promoting healthy eating habits.
- **Local research** to develop region-specific dietary guidelines.

Diet therapy is not just a complementary approach but a cornerstone of modern healthcare [10]. A well-structured dietary intervention can significantly improve patients' quality of life and reduce the burden of chronic diseases.

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